



NORTH AMERICA

Why are the countries in North America so prone to natural disasters?



Map and Overview



- North America is the world's third largest continent by area. It covers about 24.7 million km², which is about 16.5% of the earth's total land area.
- North America is the fourth most populous continent, after Asia, Africa and Europe. Its population is about 580 million people.
- North America is in the western hemisphere (apart from Hawaii and parts of Alaska) and the northern hemisphere.
- The first people reached America over a frozen crossing from Siberia in the last Ice Age, between 40,000 and 15,000 years ago.

Human Geography Features

Population Densities		The population density for North America is about 20 people per km ² . However, due to big cities in some areas (e.g. New York City) and extreme weather in others (e.g. northern Canada) people are not spread evenly.	Where? Parts of Central America and the Caribbean are also densely populated.	Key Fact: The most densely populated country in North America is Bermuda.
Manhattan, New York City		Manhattan is the business and entertainment centre of New York City, the largest city in the US. Manhattan is mostly on an island, with many high rise buildings, e.g. the Empire State Building, surrounding Central Park.	What? One WTC is the tallest building in Manhattan and the USA, at 546 metres.	Key Fact: In 2001, the original World Trade Centre towers were destroyed by terrorists.
Colonisation/ Languages		Throughout the 16 th -17 th centuries, European settlers (mainly from Britain, Spain and France) colonised different parts of North America. Many native North Americans became displaced by the colonisers.	When? The USA became independent from colonisers on July 4 th , 1776.	Key Fact: The languages spoken in North America are mainly as a result of colonisation.
Sports/ Recreation		North America is relatively unique in that sports that originated in the region (e.g. American football, baseball, basketball) are more popular than the global sports popular elsewhere (e.g. football/soccer, rugby, cricket).	What? American football is the most popular sport in the USA.	Key Fact: Lacrosse is the fastest growing sport in North America.
The Mexican Drug War		This an ongoing conflict between the Mexican government and several of the large drug cartels. This has been in response to the excessive wealth, control, and violence of the cartels.	What? Mexican cartels control 90% of illegal drugs entering the USA.	Key Fact: The Mexican government declared the war in 2006.

Countries of North America

Largest N. American countries

1. Canada – 9.98 million km²
2. USA – 9.83 million km²
3. Greenland (Den) – 2.16 million km²
4. Mexico – 1.96 million km²
5. Nicaragua – 130,375 km²

There are 23 countries in North America, and a further 9 states that are listed as dependencies of other nations.

Most populous N. American countries

1. USA – 328 million people
2. Mexico – 132 million people
3. Canada – 37 million people
4. Guatemala – 18 million people
5. Cuba – 11 million people

The United States



The United States is a large country made up of 50 states – including 48 on the US mainland, plus Alaska and Hawaii. It has the largest population of any country in North America, and the third largest population in the world. The USA is considered the richest and most powerful country in the world, at the forefront of world politics and economy.

Canada



Canada is the largest country by area in North America, and the second largest in the world (after Russia). As a whole, Canada is very sparsely populated – most of its population lives along the US border in the south, whilst very few people live in the central and northern areas of the country. Most of its land is dominated by forest and tundra.

Central America



Central America is the region found on the southern tip of North America, and contains many smaller nations: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. The countries have many cultural similarities, and Spanish is the main language in the region. The area is sometimes considered as its own microcontinent.

The Caribbean Islands

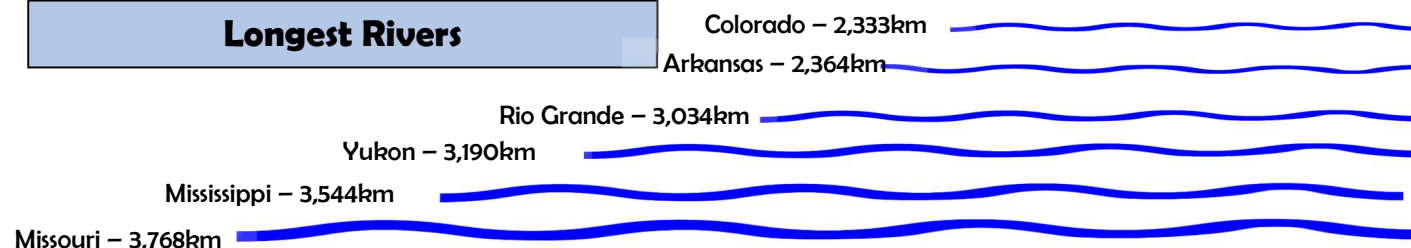


The Caribbean Islands are a number of tropical islands based in the Caribbean Sea off North America. The sea is considered as a part of the Atlantic Ocean. It is bordered by Mexico and Central America. Cuba is by far the largest Caribbean Island, with an area of 105,806 km². The Caribbean Islands are sometimes referred to as the West Indies.

Physical Geography Features

The Mississippi River		The Mississippi River is the second-longest on the continent, with its basin including 32 states in the USA. North Americans have lived along the Mississippi River for thousands of years.	What? Along the river is amongst the most fertile places in the USA.	Key Fact: The Mississippi serves as a boundary between several states.
The Great Lakes		The Great Lakes are a series of interconnected lakes across the USA-Canada border. They include lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario. By area, they are the largest lake system in the world, and 2 nd by volume.	What? Because of their great size and their waves, they are sometimes called inland seas.	Key Fact: Only Lake Baikal in Russia has a larger volume than the North American Great Lakes.
Animals		Due to the extreme latitudes of the continent, there are a wide variety of animals adapted to different climates in North America. The brown bear is one of the largest and most powerful carnivores, whilst the American alligator is a feared predator in South-Eastern USA.	What? North America has 457 mammals, 662 reptiles & 300 amphibians.	Key Fact: American Alligators can attain lengths of longer than 4m – they are a serious threat to people.
Death Valley		Death Valley, located in eastern California, is one of the hottest places in the world. Its Badwater Basin is 86m below sea level, the lowest point on the continent.	What? It has an area of 7,800 km ²	Key Fact: In 1913, the heat reached 56.7°C, the hottest ever recorded.
Hawaiian Islands		The Hawaiian Islands consist of 8 major islands, and many other smaller islets in the North Pacific Ocean. They are spread out over 2400km. The islands are the exposed peaks of a massive underwater mountain chain.	Where? The islands are about 3,000km from the nearest continent.	Key Fact: Mount Kea is the 'tallest' mountain in the world – 10,000m from base to tip (6,000m is below the sea).

Longest Rivers



Highest Mountains

